

Cler

WILMINGTON MORNING NEWS (DEL.)

11 September 1980

# Stealth security wasn't breached

High-energy death ray weapons are discussed in this week's Time magazine. Scientists in the United States and the Soviet Union are trying to perfect new laser beam technology for military purposes, according to the Time report.

Is Time's disclosure that such work is in progress a breach of security? Of course not. We know that the Russians want to outdo us in this new technology, and they know that we are trying to beat them in this deadly game.

But what about Stealth, the technology being developed for shielding aircraft and other weapons against detection by radar? Reports appeared in the American press recently that such technology is indeed in the works. Then Secretary of Defense Harold Brown confirmed that this type of research is going on. No details were given out. No specifics were mentioned. The Stealth project was merely affirmed in the most general terms.

Does anyone really believe that Russian intelligence or other foreign intelligence agencies did not know before the Brown affirmation that this kind of work was going on? If no one is naive enough to believe that, why accuse the Carter administration of a breach of security in confirming the existence of the Stealth project?

The answer to that last question is as simple as it is discouraging: This is an election year and any cause that can be turned to supposed political advantage will be so turned. So former President Ford and Republican challenger Reagan are now out on the hustings accusing the president of using disclosure of ongoing military research as a political tool to prove that his administration has not neglected American defense.

They are sparing no rhetoric on this charge. They are calling the Stealth project "the most highly classified, most highly secret weapons information since the Manhattan Project." They charge that Messrs. Brown and Carter have handed the Russians a "10-year headstart" for developing Stealth countermeasures.

How that charge can be made to stick when only nonspecific, topical information was made available is for the voters to figure out. As for us, we place this security breach argument along with all the other non-issues — the back and forth on the Ku Klux Klan; the who should debate whom, when and how, etc. — that have dominated to date in this bitter election campaign. And we wonder when there will be discussions of substance.